

# GAMING INSURRECTION

FOR GAMERS, BY GAMERS

YEAR 16

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ISSUE 47

# SUPER

# ABARI

# GAME BAR

*Series*



GI GOES BACK TO THE FUTURE OF ARCADES

# from the editor



**W**ith cold weather upon us and the new year already here and roaring, Gaming Insurrection is super excited. We're entering our 22nd year of existence and our 16th year of continuous operation. I was 20 years old and nearing the end of my journalism schooling when I co-founded GI with Marcus Barnes. I'm pleased to see that though I've changed careers, GI remains viable and something cool to do as a hobby.

In the service of keeping GI on its toes, we've been traveling as a part of a planned three-tale saga about barcades. The newest trend in the arcade scene is to mix alcohol and arcade cabinets, and GI is on top of it with a first visit to Super Abari Game Bar in

Charlotte, N.C. We took a look around during two separate visits to get a feel for the bar and reminisce about the days of yore when we could go play Mortal Kombat and other favorites with joysticks and couldn't drink. The neat thing is we now can, and it was a blast on both trips. We show off our findings starting on page 4.

Finding arcades in this day and age is a hard-fought endeavor, and it's safe to say we were lucky. We'll keep up the good fight with other trips, but please do enjoy our sojourn north.

Enjoy the issue!

Lyndsey Beatty, editor-in-chief



**LYNDSLEY BEATTY**  
**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

**LYNDSLEY BEATTY** is co-founder and editor-in-chief of GI. She enjoys binge watching TV with her husband, editing as part of the Uppercut Editions team and playing various retro video games. Lyndsey resides in Columbia, S.C., and is an accounting auditor for the state of South Carolina.

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## GAMING INSURRECTION

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## GI REVIEW POLICY

Scale is from 1 to 5 as follows:

1 — **Broken.** Absolutely do not play this game. A broken mess from start to finish. Game is unplayable and irredeemable in all areas.

2 — **Substandard.** The game isn't for everyone. Some mechanics work; others need work. Overall design is questionable in some areas.

3 — **Average and meets expectations.** Mechanics work and it's a decent package overall. It's playable, and you'll come back to the game.

4 — **Above average.** Exceeds expectations. Overall, a great game worth keeping in a gamer's library. Presentation and mechanics all work as expected and add to or enhance the gaming experience.

5 — **Masterpiece.** Everyone should play this title at least once to experience what it has to offer.

STAFF



**BRANDON BEATTY**  
**EDITOR-AT-LARGE**

**BRANDON BEATTY** is editor-at-large for GI. Brandon writes reviews when the mood strikes him, produces the quarterly Otaku Corner column for The Strip and spends a significant amount of time watching new and old anime alike with his wife. Brandon resides in Columbia, S.C., and is a security specialist for the state of South Carolina.

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## Ridge Racer V rolls with varied, excellent soundtrack



Namco Bandai's sound department is known for its prowess. It does not miss when it comes to delivering quality soundtracks for a variety of gaming genres. One of GI's favorite series that has received the magic touch is Ridge Racer. Consistently tops for great driving music whether it's in-game or real life, Ridge Racer can be counted on for great audio and Ridge Racer V is no exception. These are our favorite tracks from the PlayStation 2 entry.

- 1. GripMillenium:** An optimistic track, GripMillenium's epic synthesizers punctuate a strong track that sounds very much at home as a final track in a racing game as you're crossing the finishing line.
- 2. HydroPrism:** A funky track that plays with a drum and bass kit strongly, HydroPrism is a nice track that sounds close to a few Tekken Tag Tournament tracks. It's slow and fun with an R&B slant.
- 3. Junx (Remix):** This remix is a club tune that features a prominent piano at the forefront. This reminds of early 1990s club bangers but fits well within the confines of Ridge Racer easily.
- 4. Junx Engine:** This is a short remix of Junx that also utilizes the same piano found in Junx (Remix).
- 5. Junx Interlude:** This is another short version of Junx, but it features the piano and additional strings.
- 6. DareDevil:** DareDevil is a loud rollicking rock track that is fun to roll around



listening to during races. Guitars and heavy metal are the gimmicks of the track and despite being an entirely different genre than what we're used to with Ridge Racer, composer Kohta Takahashi created a banger.

**7. ElectroGlide:** ElectroGlide sounds a lot like early Namco workhorse Pac-Man, which probably wasn't an accident here. Its various retro video game sound effects invoke an arcade feel, which Ridge Racer was known for in its early days.

**8. Euphoria:** The beats and the synths

here are excellent and gel well. Given that Euphoria was composed by Takahashi, who also worked on Ridge Racer Type 4, it's not a surprise that this track sounds the most like the previous game. That's a compliment because R4 had an all-time excellent soundtrack. It also invokes the aforementioned Tekken Tag Tournament, which was released around the same time for the PS2 and also has a fantastic soundtrack. This is one of the best tracks on the roster.

## Arcades are the future of arcade industry

The death knell for arcades has sounded, and I don't think many people were really paying attention when it did. I did, but I didn't really understand what was happening until it was too late.

In this day and age, the home console is king. But there was a time when going out of the house to play against people in the latest and greatest fighting game was all the rage. There was nothing comparable at home just yet. Sure, playing Mortal Kombat for Genesis was a sort of training for the real thing at the arcade, but slowly and surely it became the other way around. And, let us not forget: Everything that is available now once had its start in the arcade.

The console market blew up and took over sales and spawn points for fighting games and "arcade" games. Before, you could be reasonably assured of a Smash TV doing well and continuing the trend in the home console wars of the early 1990s. Now? Everything starts in the home, and I don't just mean with manners and etiquette.

Arcades were a light-house, a safety marker, a refuge for the hungry and sociable. They were a place to go to make friends with a common interest, a place to go to show off skills in a hobby that made you king or queen if only for a brief moment. It was all at once date night gateway, family fun center, and dating meet spot where love and friendship could maybe blossom over token placement and shared tips in Mortal Kombat 3 or Super Street Fighter II Turbo. But who am I kidding? I'm romanticizing the last bastion of coin-operated entertainment and ignoring that the money came home. That's why arcades are dead. But are they really? If judging by the barcade concept, I think we can safely say maybe not. There's still a market, but it's not as vibrant as it once was and maybe never again. But know that I have heaved a sigh of relief as I put tokens into a machine to play once more in the 21st century recently. And know that it feels good and right once more.



Lyndsey Beatty  
CRY OF WAR

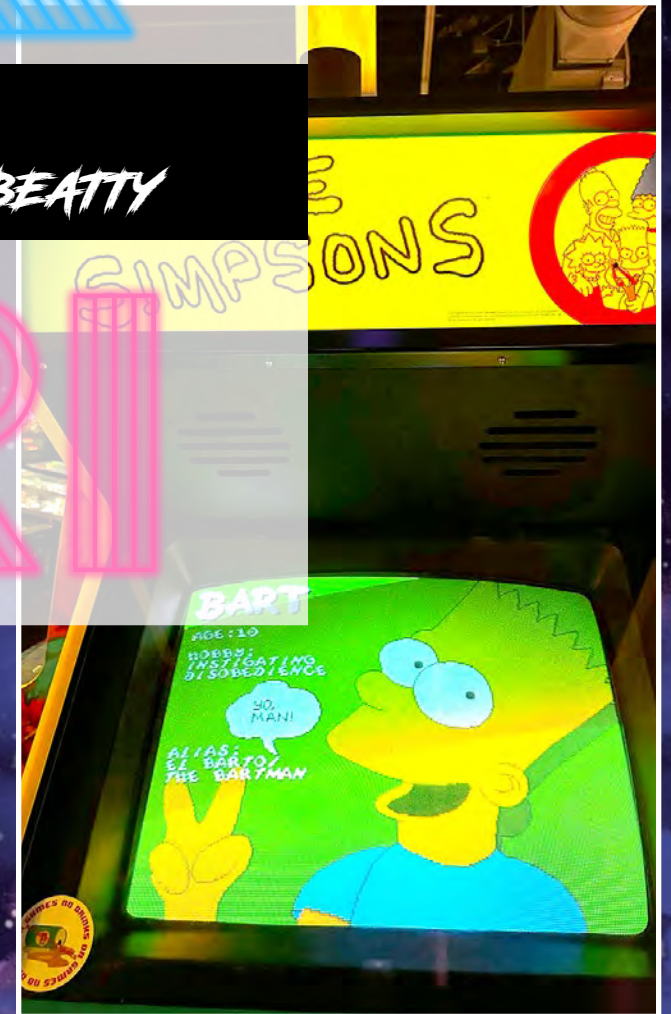


# SUPER



WORDS BY LYNDSEY M. BEATTY  
ART BY BRANDON BEATTY & LYNDSEY M. BEATTY

# ABARI



# Gaming Insurrection Visits Super Abari

Updated Jan 5, 2024 • Public

**G**aming Insurrection has always been geared toward arcade life. Whether it was traveling a few miles to fight the local competition in Mortal Kombat II or to stomp on arrows in Dance Dance Revolution, GI has always made it a priority to find a hideaway that traffics in tokens. In the start of a three-feature series, GI traveled north twice to visit the latest trend in the arcade scene: a barcade. Barcades are the future of arcades, where mixed drinks and arcade cabinets meet to have a nostalgic type of fun. The first of the series features the great Super Abari, of Charlotte, N.C. Here, you'll find an assortment of cabinet-games, a giant Game Boy Tetris station and American Gladiators playing for the general populace to enjoy. Come with us as we walk through the barcade and show off the past and the future.



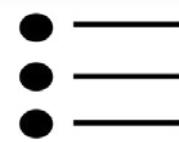
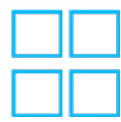
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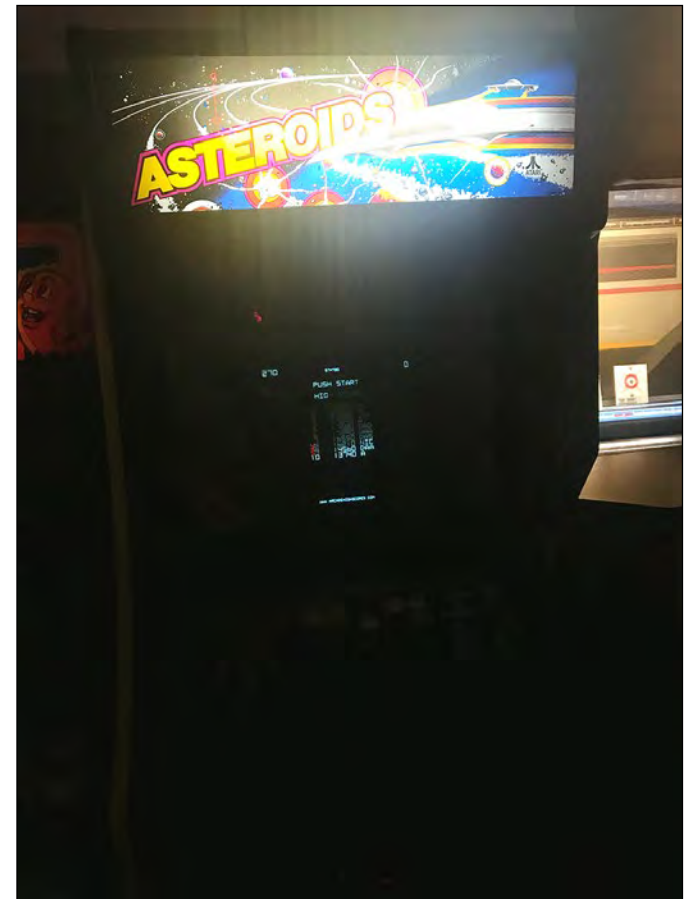
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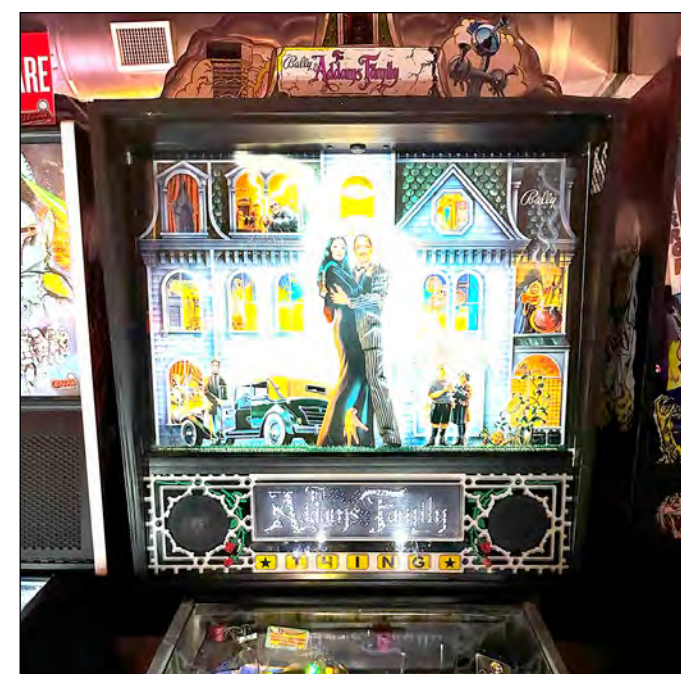
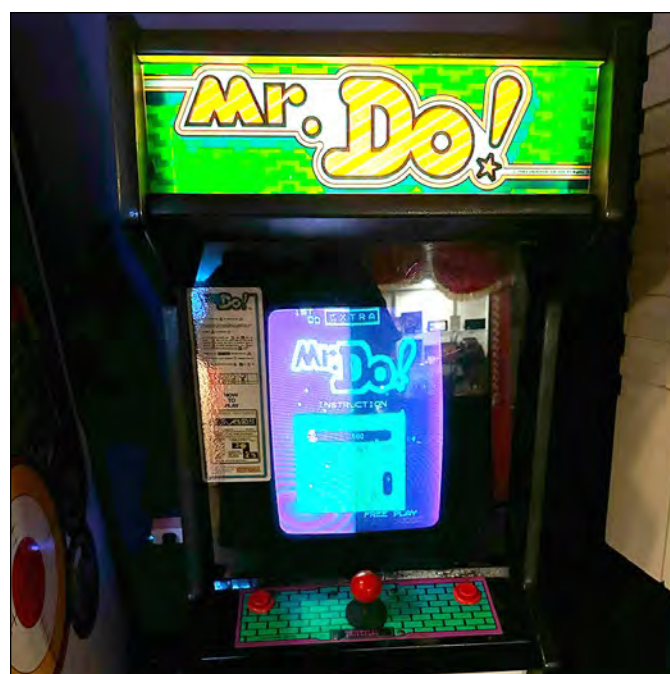
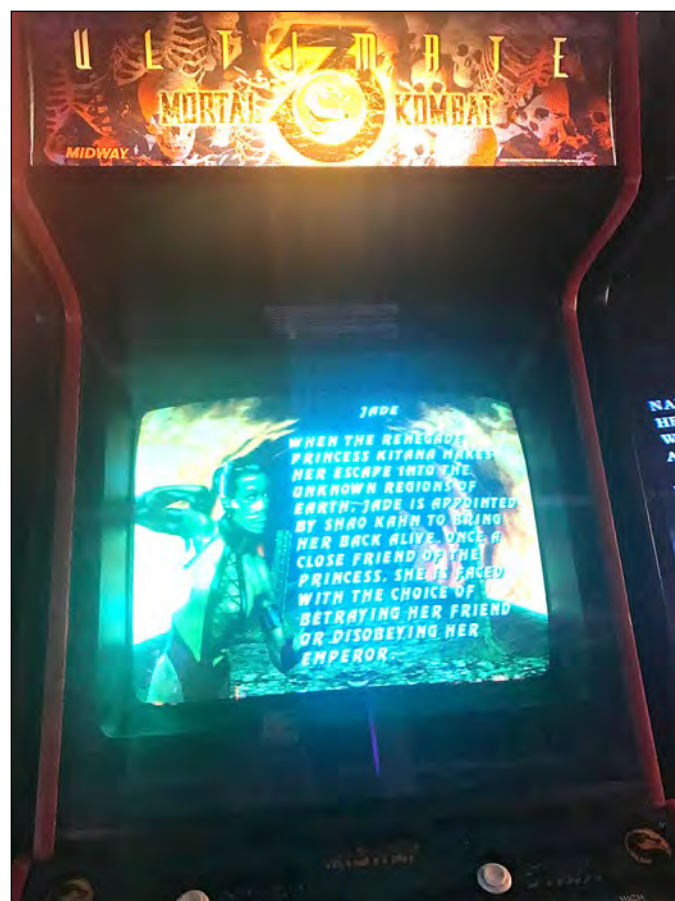


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# GAMES GALORE!

## Arcade

Area 51/Maximum Force  
 Battlezone  
 Bishi Bashi Channel  
 Burgertime  
 Captain America and the Avengers  
 CarnEvil  
 Centipede  
 Crab Volleyball  
 Cruis'n World  
 Daytona USA  
 Dig Dug  
 Donkey Kong  
 Enter the Gungeon: House of the Gundead  
 Flamin Finger  
 Foiled  
 Frogger  
 Galaga: Demons of Death  
 The Real Ghostbusters  
 GI Joe  
 House of the Dead 2  
 Initial D Stage 8  
 JoJo's Bizarre Adventure  
 Laser Ghost

Mappy  
 Marvel vs. Capcom 2: New Age of Heroes  
 Mocap Boxing  
 Moonwalker  
 Mortal Kombat 4  
 Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3  
 Mr. Do  
 Ms. Pac-Man  
 Multi-Williams  
 NBA Jam: Tournament Edition  
 NFL Blitz 2000/NBA Showtime  
 Nidhogg 2  
 Out Run  
 Pac-Man  
 Panic Park  
 Police Trainer  
 Quick & Crash  
 Satan's Hollow  
 Scotto  
 Spider-Man  
 Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike  
 Super Off Road  
 Switch 'N' Shoot  
 Tekken 5  
 Terminator 2

Tetris  
 The Simpsons  
 Track & Field  
 Dr. Mario  
 Vs. Duck Hunt  
 WWF Superstars

## Pinball

Attack From Mars Remake (SE)  
 Batman 66 (Premium)  
 Baywatch  
 Creature from the Black Lagoon  
 Deadpool (Pro)  
 Fish Tales  
 The Flintstones  
 Foo Fighters  
 Ghostbusters  
 Godzilla  
 Grand Lizard  
 Halloween  
 Indiana Jones  
 Iron Maiden  
 Dr. No  
 The Lord of the Rings  
 Mata Hari  
 Medieval Madness Remake

Metallica  
 Monster Bash  
 Radical!  
 Scared Stiff  
 Scooby-Doo  
 Star Wars  
 Stranger Things  
 Tales From the Crypt  
 The Addams Family  
 The Machine: Bride of Pinbot  
 The Simpsons Pinball Party  
 Total Nuclear Annihilation  
 Tron Legacy  
 Twilight Zone  
 Venom  
 Whitewater  
 World Cup Soccer

## Rhythm

Chunithm Paradise  
 Jubeat Festo  
 Taiko No Tatsujin 14  
 Wacca Reverse



## RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Super Abari's other offerings, besides video games, are the drinks. Numerous alcoholic beverages are for sale while you play or watch TV with most named after famous video game characters. If partaking is your thing, there are other canned and bottled drinks for sale as well. And

for good measure, there is an established lineup of food trucks to choose from. Here are some of their current drink specials available:

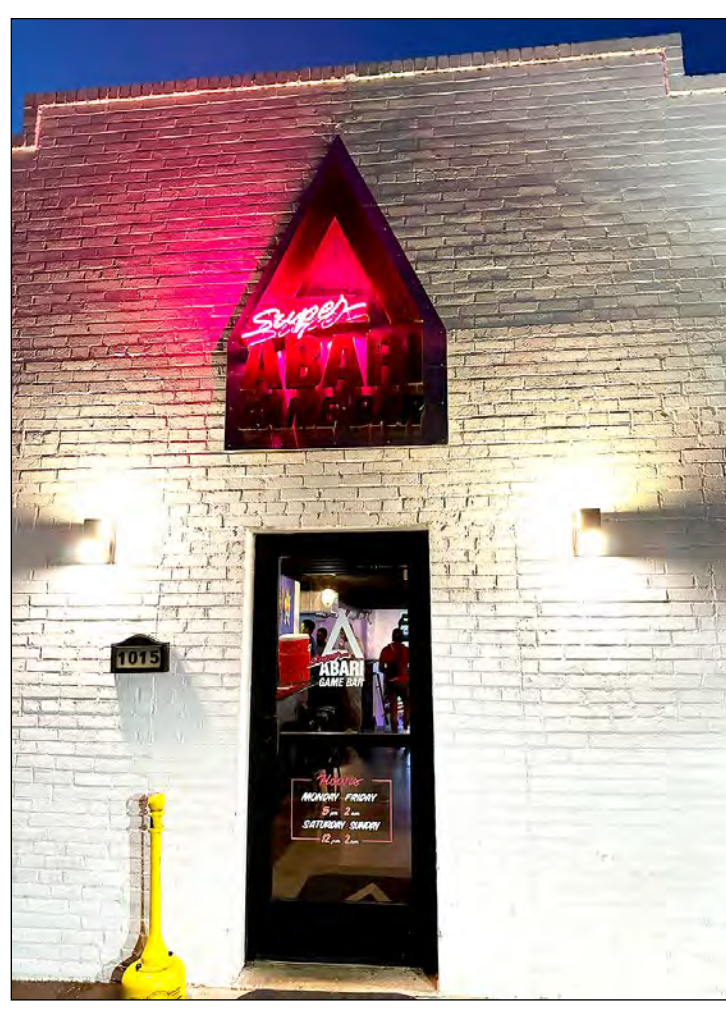
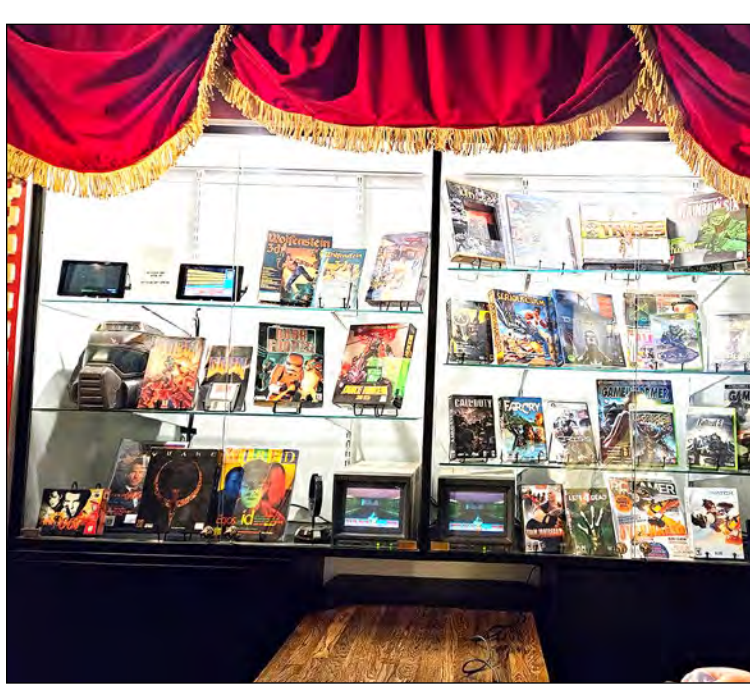
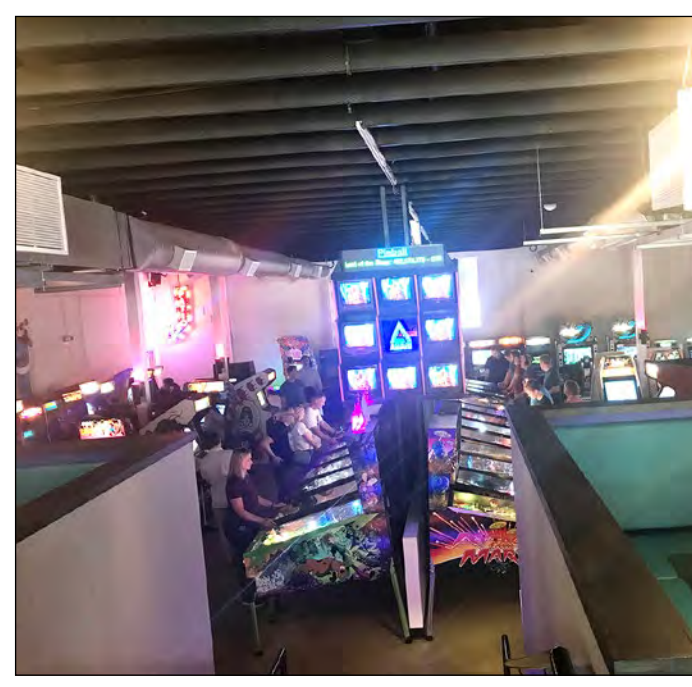
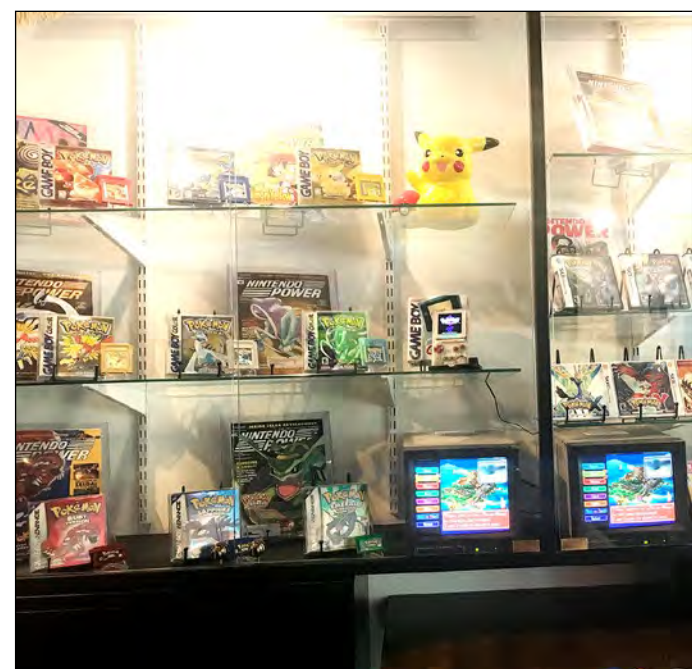
**Monday:** \$5 draft beers, \$2.50 Hamms, \$7 Fernet, \$2.50

Monster

**Tuesday:** \$4 Rebel Hard Coffee, \$6 Dirty White Tee shots

**Wednesday:** \$5 Well Liquor U-Call-Its, \$5 Fireball, \$4 Chilly Bevs

**Thursday:** \$1.50 PBR drafts



# RESOURCES

## WANT TO GO?

Super Abari isn't hard to find in Charlotte's Uptown! You can get there most easily from I-277, and it's not far from Uptown where there are lots of things to do and places to stay in town. Here are the bar's contact information and hours of operation.

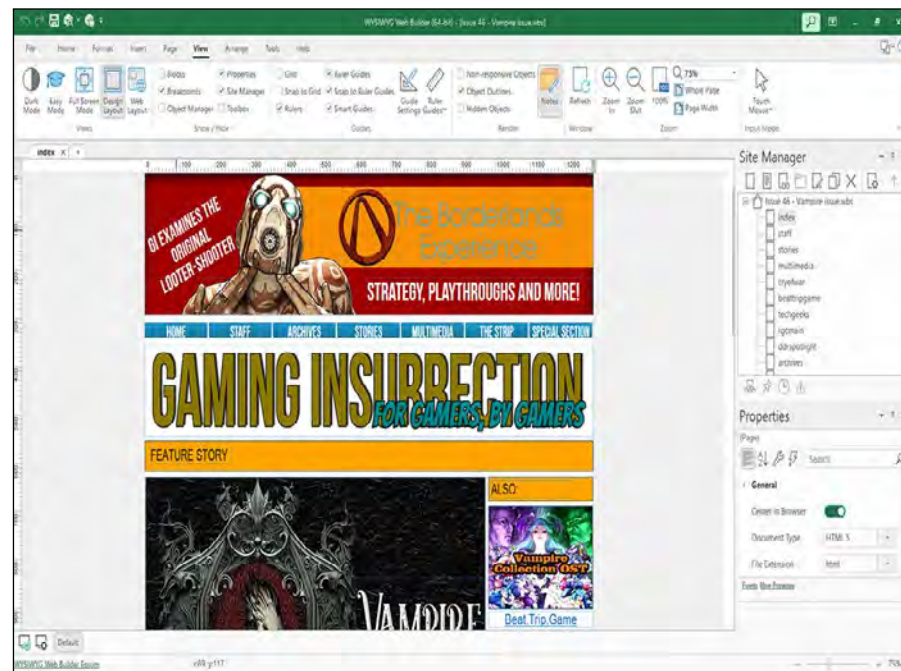
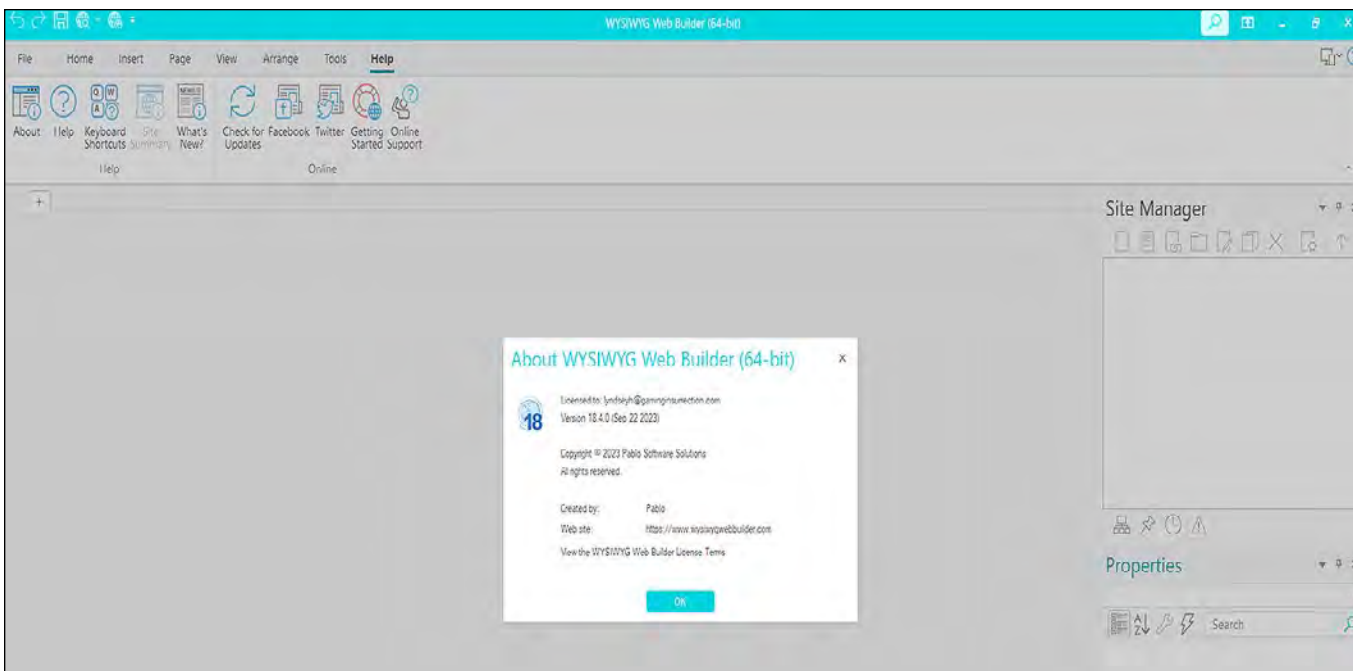
**Contact**  
**Address:** 1015 Seigle Ave., Charlotte, NC  
**Website:** <https://superabarigamebar.com>  
**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/abarigamebar>  
**Instagram:** @abarigamebar  
**E-mail:** info@abarigamebar.com  
**Phone:** (704) 271-1252

**Hours**  
 Monday – Friday: 5 p.m. to 2 a.m.  
 Saturday and Sunday: noon to 2 a.m.  
 21+ establishment. All ages are welcome Saturday and Sunday from noon to 6 p.m. Anyone younger than 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian during these times.

# RESOURCES



# TECH GEEKS



## WYSIWYG WEB BUILDER 18

We've long designed the very website you're reading this on ourselves and through some sort of web design application. We're journalists and accountants by trade, not web programmers or web designers, so, clearly, we need help. With the discontinuation of support for Adobe's Muse in 2018, we were in the market for something new. And we found WYSIWYG Web Builder.

The application is nicely and cleanly built and has a lot of options for the

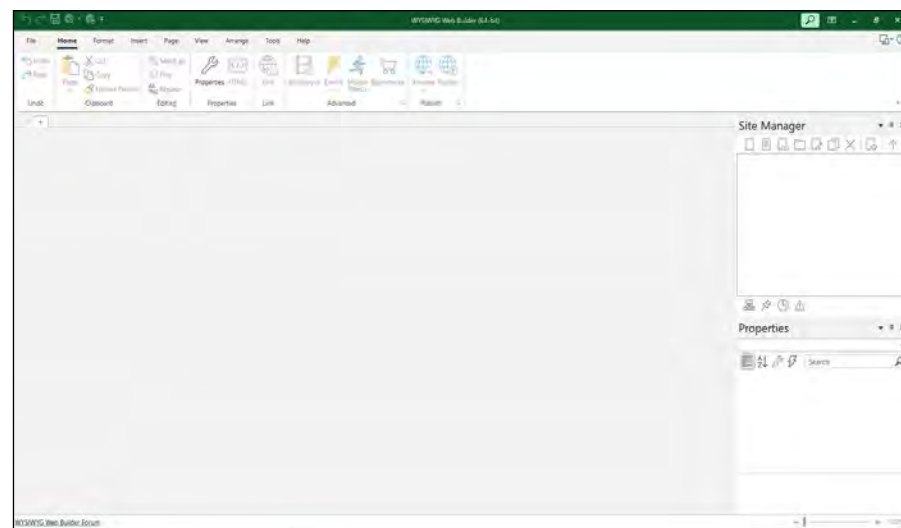
inexperienced but also the intermediate user. GI took several days to play around with the application before purchasing a license and that helped clear up some questions we had. It was easy to use, and whatever issues we ran into in the course of redesigning our website, we found the answers on our own or through the helpful forums. So far, our only gripe is some of the extensions. While they are useful, they aren't explained well so there was a lot of trial and error until we stumbled

on the correct solution. Better documentation would have helped with the Random Player playlist extension, specifically.

Overall, however, we're pleased with the builder, and we're excited with what we can come up with.

**Price:** Free with watermark, or paid license: \$99.95

**Where to download:** [WYSIWYGwebbuilder.com](http://WYSIWYGwebbuilder.com)



## TRELLO

Organization is key for everyday life here at GI and beyond. We pride ourselves in being extremely organized when it comes to producing issues and keeping up with the myriad tasks that go into completing an issue on time. We stay on top of everything with Trello, a digital to-do list.

Trello takes to-do lists and makes them easy to see with a virtual board

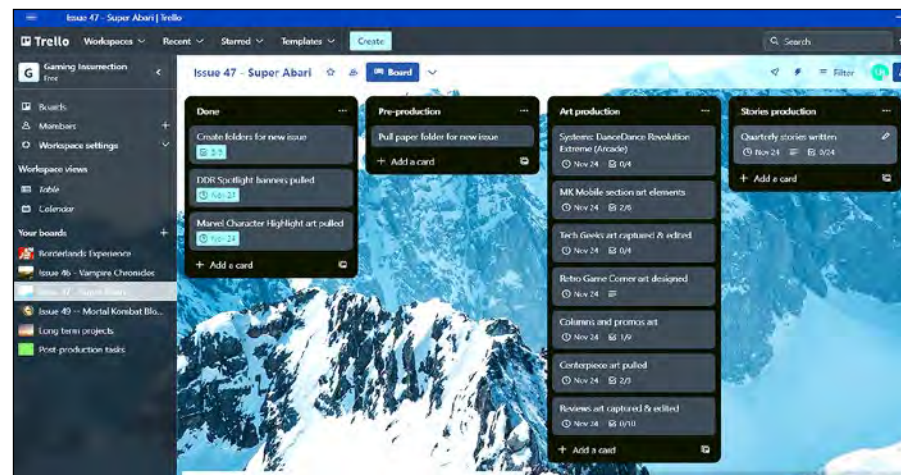
that can be customized and shared with others. The card format is easy to understand, and adding additional details, automation and dates is easy and painless. GI started using it with Uppercut Editions for a project and eventually integrated it into the production of issues quickly and easily.

The free version comes with a ton of features but if adding work pipeline

and calendar functions is your thing, have at it with the paid version. Trello speeds up workflow and adds a level of detail to our organization that is unparalleled.

**Price:** Free, with various paid upgrades

**Where to download:** [www.trello.com](http://www.trello.com)



GAME OF THE ISSUE

Select Game



CAPCOM FIGHTING COLLECTION

Despite some questionable inclusions, Capcom has a fighting chance with this collection of their fighters, **PAGE 11**

← Hyper Street Fighter II: The Anniversary Edition →

Game Version

Japanese Version (Japan 040202)

P1

play. OPTIONS Training □ Game Settings ▲ Controller Settings × Start Game ○ Back

GAME OF THE ISSUE

INSIDE



**12** Mega Man X Collection Disc 1  
The Blue Bomber and his successor Zero gather their first four formidable adventures together in a spectacular disc aimed to get you reminiscing about good retro Mega Man.



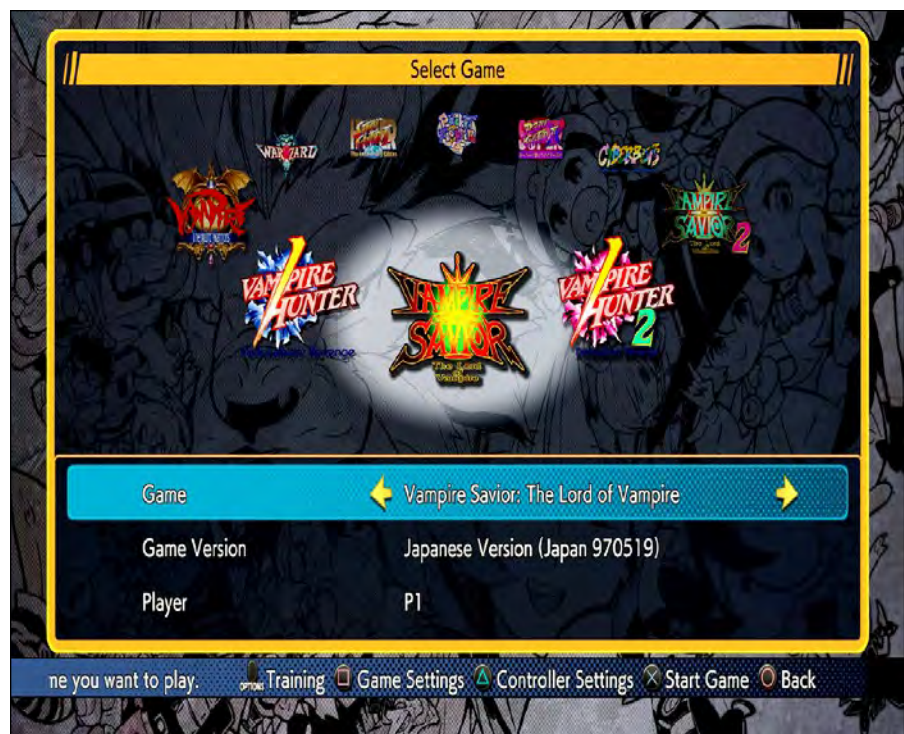
**13** Devil May Cry 2  
We're not sure how it happened back in the day, but Devil May Cry 2 somehow managed to be one of the worst-regarded sequels in video game history. It fares better with GI now.



**14** New Super Mario Bros. (DS)  
Mario found a way to keep the formula fresh with new mechanics and succeeded in introducing a new generation to portable Mario. New Super Mario Bros. is fantastic.



**15** Bust-A-Move 2  
The bubble-bursting sequel looks better, plays slightly better and works better. Despite the platitudes, though, it's further down the echelon of puzzle goodness.



Developer: Capcom, Release: 2022

# Give this collection a fighting chance



Capcom tends to tread a lot of the same ground these days. Whether it's "getting back to their roots" with Street Fighter's modern versions or returning to the past with a lot of upgraded collections, Capcom sure has a way of reminding you that, yes, they made Street Fighter and a bunch of other fighting games. The question is do we care? Yes and no, if this current collection is to be judged.

I will admit that, despite being a strict Mortal Kombat old head, I am inclined to speak up about my favorite genre in fighting games and how it relates to Capcom. This collection, filled to the brim with nothing but Capcom fighters, aims to show that Capcom had some hits and memorable properties. Fighting Collection features 10 entries: Vampire/Darkstalkers 1-3, Vampire Hunter 2, Vampire Savior 2, Cyberbots: Full Metal Madness, WarZard/Red Earth, Hyper Street Fighter II: The Anniversary Edition, Super Gem Fighter Mini Mix/Pocket Fighter and Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo, with the North American or Japanese versions available for play. In all cases, these are arcade rom versions gathered together in one spot and you can freely switch between them on free play. Collection-wise, this is a top-tier package for those who love fighting games made by Capcom. Mainstream money maker that's still around today? That's Hyper Street Fighter II. Obscure weird fighter that no one even knows that Capcom made it? Take your pick from Cyberbots and WarZard. Cutesy, chibi fighter that unabashedly mocks its maker? Puzzle Fighter and Pocket Fighter have that on lock. Defunct series that should still be a thing, but Capcom doesn't pay attention? All of the Vampire you can possibly shake a stick at satisfies that requirement. There is literally something for everyone here. But the question is, do you want it, especially now that you know what's available here? As earlier, yes and no.

While the presentation is top-notch, the actual assortment of the games involved is a mixed bag. Gentle readers, I just compiled and created an entire issue devoted to Vampire (Editor's note: That'd be Issue 46. Go download it now if you haven't.) and its inner workings and the history behind the series. Knowing that, please explain to me why I have Vampire burn-out and why I had it before I did that issue because of this collection. Capcom does this song and dance every single time Vampire is whispered somewhere by some unsuspecting gamer who loves the series and wants to see it once more have its day in the sun. I wrote an entire column in that previous issue discussing the need for a Vampire revival — a



By Lyndsey Beatty

new game, not an old rehash — and how we were never going to get that because Capcom does the series dirty constantly.

Well, wouldn't you know it, Capcom pulled a skunk out of their hat by including all of the Vampire games here. It's like they said, "Well, you asked for more Vampire. Here, be satisfied that we

released all of them finally in North America and shut up." You know, I'm slightly happy but I'm more offended than anything else. Because, as you should have read by now gentle reader, Capcom is never going to give us a new Vampire game without there being some weirdness attached. And because this collection sold "OK," — not great, just OK — you know we aren't getting a new game. Because it didn't set the world on fire in sales doesn't mean the demand isn't there. But I digress. Everything else in this collection has been released in some way, shape or form in either region, so it wasn't necessary for their inclusion, either.

What I would have preferred to see are Rival Schools, Project Justice, Star Gladiator and Plasma Sword. These are defunct Capcom series that they also like to act like they didn't create. Rival Schools and Project Justice are especially egregious because while they've been ported to PlayStation Network, we haven't gotten a full, unaltered port of either game. A modern translation of the board game and simulation mode in both games is not that hard, but I digress again because we know we are never getting it. It's a shame because this collection as pulled together in 2022 could have used some better curation.

While I love Capcom fighting games, I'm OK about this collection. It's nice to have these in a modern package for modern consoles but I'm not enthused about the behind-the-scenes foolishness that could have been avoided with better curating on Capcom's part. There are some heavy hitters that could have been included immediately that would have made it a better package, and the extras included could have been better also. However, it's not a terrible package and is infinitely useful and valuable to the fighting game population so it's not a total wash. Capcom could collect better, though.

**SCORE:**  
**4.5 OUT**  
**OF 5**



Developer: Capcom, Release: 2018

# A good start to a long-lasting legacy



I'm a huge Mega Man fan. It started with the original series and evolved to include the X series. Fearless GI leader Lyndsey gifted me a treasure trove of Mega Man X games worthy of Capcom's next generation blue titan, and Mega Man X Legacy Collection has risen to the top of the pile.



By **Brandon Beatty**

frame for each game. A music player containing all the music from the original games also rounds out the presentation extras, which were nice.

The first disc of Legacy Collection covers the first four MMX games that were released for the SNES and PSOne. In these games, you control our favorite hero in blue or his later partner Zero in their quest to achieve peace in the future. Each game has a different story that builds on the previous game, but overall X and Zero are the stars of the show with various versions of longtime antagonist Sigma attempting to achieve world domination. Each of the first four games has various bosses X or Zero faces with the successful result of gaining the boss' weapon or skill that can be used for various levels. X has a slight advantage in the game by using hidden upgrade chambers designed by the late Dr. Light that increases firepower, speed and protection.

One of the other cool additions is the X Challenge, which pits you against two legendary bosses

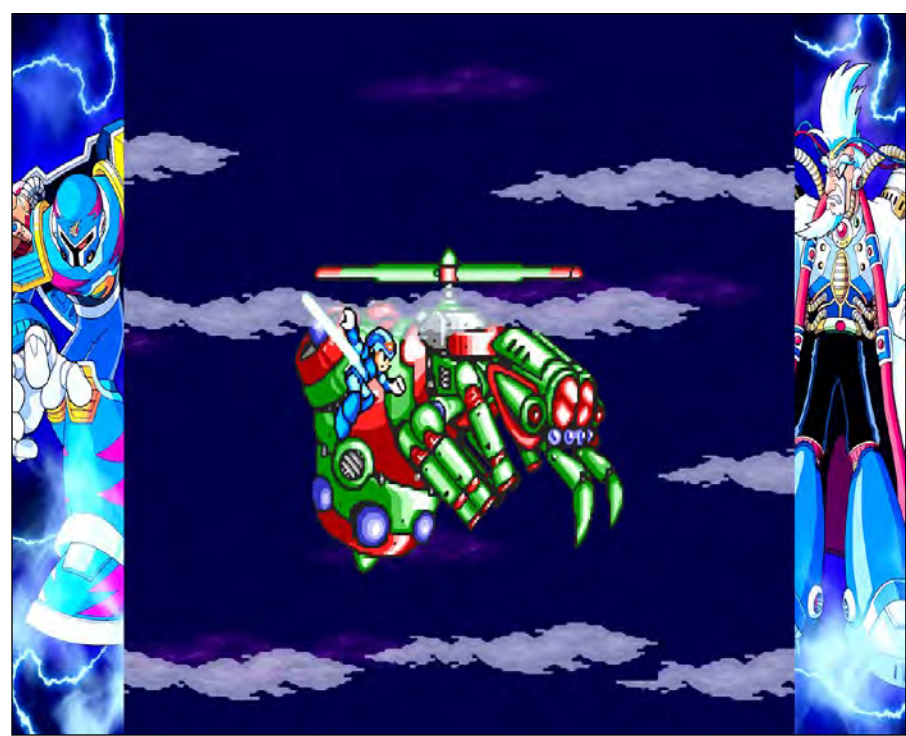
of the series while choosing three weapons to use. This requires some forethought and understanding of the series' mechanics, which is a welcome change of pace when you want something different from the story modes. I also thought that the art gallery and the animated movie focusing on Sigma was a nice touch.

**SCORE:  
3.5 OUT  
OF 5**

The value of the first disc is perfect for fans or those beginning the X series and increases with the anime-inspired designs of heroes and villains, which encourages replay of all the collection's games. This first disc also has a lot of interesting elements that include presenting 16-bit and anime-style intermission screens that were included when the games were originally released. Capcom also introduced a high-resolution filter, giving the game's graphics a streamlined yet colorful approach and a unique box

The only criticism I had of the collection is with some of the other extras. Capcom decided to show off never-before-seen Mega Man X collectibles that were only available in Japan. Capcom never did license these outside of Japan, making fans like me curse them for their dense business practices. Because, really, why would you tease other regions with this, knowing Mega Man is global? It just seems like another slap in the face where Mega Man is concerned.

Mega Man X Legacy Collection is a great tribute to the X series. Despite my hang-ups with Capcom, this is a great love letter to Mega Man X fans and can be a template to continue the story of X and company.





Developer: Capcom, Release: 2003

# You may cry over this middling sequel

Dante, Dante, Dante. Capcom's resident demon hunter/investigator has contributed greatly to the company's fortunes. From various merchandise and endorsement deals to a Netflix series due later this year, Dante is living large. However, there are games in the Devil May Cry series that almost destroyed his rising star. Devil May Cry 2 is one of those games.

In Devil May Cry 2, Dante and a new companion, Lucia, join forces to battle demons led by an international businessman named Arius whose company called Uroboros establishes itself on the island of Vie de Marli. Arius' true goal is to find holy relics called Arcanas so that he can obtain the powers of the ancient demon Argosax. Now locked in a race against time, Dante and Lucia must battle against Argosax and put an end to Arius' madness before the world is plunged into eternal darkness.

DMC2's graphics and presentation had a nice approach instead of the usual haphazard scenery found in most hack-and-slash games. It's nice that the DMC2 development team took inspiration from Western Europe and the Mediterranean region and combined that with various elements from Japanese, Latin and Greek cultures and various religious elements. However, the parts of the dealbreaker with DMC2 soon appeared with various scenes as poorly done clay sculptures.

Further in the game, the graphics became more of a disappointment, despite giving leeway to the PlayStation 2's hardware capabilities in its early years. One of the most glaring issues involved the camera. The in-game camera was weird and clunky, zooming in and out oddly in underground areas. And, it was too rigid when it needed to move with Dante. The controls were tank-like — Capcom's normal standard operational procedure — but it was more annoying when I was shooting at enemies long distance and wasting ammo and mobility. The tanking of Dante is counter to him being agile, which was a major selling point that catapulted him to stardom. Another issue was that the in-game



By  
**Brandon Beatty**

store sold various skill and weapon upgrades including health items but were ridiculously expensive despite me having the ability to gather more coins seamlessly here than in the original game. That's a major turnoff because it's a chore. More work for more expensive rewards is not fun.

The music of DMC2 was serviceable; it feels like Capcom's renowned music team was told to phone in their work that was at best choppy but acceptable. That's a shame because all of it just seems mediocre and not the best that Capcom could do for a series of DMC's caliber.

While Capcom attempted to strike hot with a global smash-hit property, they managed to fail because they treat

DMC2 like their other critically acclaimed series (Mega Man, Rival Schools, the Versus series and Onimusha) not named Street Fighter: like FLAMING GARBAGE. As a fan of DMC, Mega Man, Onimusha and various Capcom games, I'm incensed that these titles are beloved globally, yet Capcom does very little or nothing to do proper promotion for them, yet they profit HUGELY from them. Unfortunately, Dante fell victim to the Capcom curse for which he cannot blame his black sheep brother — this time.

Devil May Cry 2 should have been the lightning that struck twice. Fortunately for Dante and Co., Capcom management saw the follies of mistreatment of a hot property and applied lessons learned in its future installments. As we say in GI HQ, "Know better, do better." Capcom should have done better with this sequel because they knew better. Dante should have been able to keep it stylish, but this is a major stumble in an otherwise stellar jackpot of a series.

**SCORE:**  
**2.5 OUT**  
**OF 5**





Developer: Nintendo, Release: 2006

# Stomping step stone

## New Super Mario Bros. DS a good trial run

Now, y'all know I love me some Mario. I'm a Mario girl and have been for a long time. A whole issue devoted to him and his exploits aside, there are few mainline Mario games that I haven't played and enjoyed. As a connoisseur on all things Mario, his leap to 3D was not one of my favorite things to experience because of the surprise condition of motion sickness. So, imagine my happiness when the series took the sidestep to start producing 2D games again. Nintendo's first entry, New Super Mario Bros., was a warm-up if not a practice session for something greater.

The story starts pleasantly enough with Bowser kidnapping Princess Peach for the millionth time. It's standard fare for Mario games at this point and it's serviceable enough because that's what you're supposed to do in Mario games: save the princess. But there's something different here: a newer style of graphics and play mechanics to whet your appetite for that "new" in the title. The game looks cleaner and brighter as compared to the last 2D outing — Super Mario World for the SNES — and Mario is more defined. Yes, you're still in the Mushroom Kingdom but it looks newer. The way you play is also new. Mario's getting around a lot better in modern times and it started here with a new butt stomp, wall jump, triple jump and new power-ups in the Mini Mushroom, Mega Mushroom and the Blue Koopa Shell. These power-ups are welcome additions to the Mario repertoire and are fun to use.

My main gripe comes from the new mechanics, how-



By Lyndsey Beatty

ever. While I love that Mario moves well, sometimes he moves almost too well. I had the same issue here as I did with the later Wii version: Mario slides around entirely too much. I have to keep in the back of my mind to undercompensate and overcorrect with running and jumping movements constantly, and it's a bit much to keep up with while trying to play well. When I want Mario to stop running, it

should be instantly. There shouldn't be extra frames of stopping. Also, some of the jumps don't feel as clean as they should if we're basing it on the known Mario standard. It's all a little too loosey-goosey for my liking and makes clean play a little bit more of a chore than I'd care to do. Later entries have cleaned this up, but it's obvious here and I can cut it some slack because it has been fixed. Just know that it's part of the "new" experience.

New Super Mario Bros. has the Mario charm the series is known for as well. It's fun to play and discover new secrets and see the new concepts work out in a series that puts in the work to innovate and stay relevant. This first game was the stepping stone for the phenomenal New Super Mario Bros. Wii, and you can clearly see where it's going in terms of the total package. It's not an insult to say this was the practice run and that practice makes perfect, especially if you're New Super Mario Bros., and you're compared to other mainline Mario games, and you sell 30 million copies as the best-selling DS game of all-time. Clearly, this is a mega Mario hit and good starting point for the 2D throwback of the franchise.

**SCORE:**  
4.5 OUT OF 5





RANKING		VS CPU	VS CPU
1st	5r	10000 PTS	ABC
2nd	4r	5000 PTS	DEF
3rd	3r	2110 PTS	LMB
4th	3r	1000 PTS	GHI
5th	2r	500 PTS	JKL



Developer: Probe Entertainment, Release: 1998

# Bubble busting part deux

## Bust-A-Move gets down again in sequel

Long ago, bubble popping took hold of my interest, right about the time I started getting hair on my chest and some sense acquired when it came to good quality video games. And wouldn't you know it, my late great mama — the dearly departed GI Mama — also divined that she was a fan of the bubble-popping nonsense that I'd brought home for my Super Nintendo. Alas, my tastes had to grow so we looked for more bubble-popping nonsense and found there was a sequel or two to the madness. What apropos popped up was Bust-A-Move 2.

Now, let's not get it twisted: This is the same old Bust-A-Move you're used to playing if busting bubbles is your thing. Nothing is drastically different than the formula established in the original game: You pop clusters of like-colored bubbles in an effort to clear established puzzles. This basic premise was set up in the first game for the SNES and it hasn't changed, no matter the iteration. But what has changed somewhat is the presentation. In this version, there is an illuminated map puzzle path that your character can choose, and decisions have to be made to get to the end puzzle. The decision to include a visible path structure is a nice step forward, but still needs some payoff to be a gamechanger.

Slightly different yet familiar are the graphics. Bust-A-Move 2 hasn't really changed all that much in the looks department. There are some new graphics for the backgrounds during puzzles, the characters are more defined and the bubbles themselves are more crisp and deeper hued to pop but that's about it. It looks OK for an N64 puzzle game, but there are others



By Lyndsey Beatty

out there doing a lot more with the same console resources, such as Magical Tetris Challenge.

The soundtrack is a little more bubbly than the original but has a little less charm than the first game. The songs are slightly catchy, but not nearly as memorable as the first game's 16-bit organ-inspired schtick.

However, what you'll really notice that's different is the addition of voices. Now, your character and the opponents make a little noise when they achieve a combo. It's cute, even with the shrill squawking that shows up in the menu.

But let's be honest, what you came here for was to learn if the puzzle gameplay is up to the standard established by the first game. Yes, it is, and here's why: Not much changed. No crazy weird mechanics shoehorned in, no missteps in how the bubbles bank or strange concepts cobbled together (aside from the sticky platforms that inexplicably start showing up halfway through the story mode) make appearances here. You can be rest assured that it's the Bust-A-Move that we all know and love.

My beloved late GI Mama once declared Bust-A-Move a cheating game while I was molly whopping her in a versus mode run. She said she'd see me in the sequel. Well, the sequel here is just enough justification to wait for that rematch in heaven when my time comes. It's nothing new but then again, sometimes sticking with the establishment is the best idea when it comes to bubbles part deux.

SCORE:  
4 OUT  
OF 5

# Welcome to RETRO GAME CORNER

## KING OF THE HILL

### CONSOLE KINGS

## HOW HOME MACHINES WON THE WAR AGAINST ARCADES

By LYNDSEY BEATTY | GAMING INSURRECTION

The console wars might be a one-sided contest among themselves but once upon a time, arcades were a major player in the mix. Arcades were the king of video games, dens of goodness and competition, where lifelong friendships were made, and rivalries were settled with digital duels. And then they weren't king of the hill anymore, so to speak. Consoles became the way of the future. Why that happened isn't a mystery and happened for a variety of reasons. We are here examining why.



### 1 Convenience

Players no longer had to leave their homes. The prevailing thought became: Why drive to an arcade when you can be a Street Fighter/Mortal Kombat/Tekken god from the comfort of your own home? The rise of Xbox Live and PlayStation Network quickly eliminated the need for arcades. See point three about how better proliferation of affordable internet at home also gave rise to a better console experience.

### 2 Rise in quality

Home consoles finally started catching up and, by the time of the PSOne era, surpassed what was found in the arcades. It wasn't just the graphics; it was everything about the video game experience. Better control options that felt like their arcade counterparts in quality joysticks and the ability to harness the internet made it feel like everything was just a tighter and greater experience once you got into the home console sphere.

### 3 Quicker updates

Gone were the days of arcade release then home version and no updates. Publishers and developers quickly realized that consoles meant an entirely new way of milking a franchise with more fighters, tracks and content than a one-time release. Season passes quickly became the way to go. The early offerings for online play — XBand and SegaNet — whet the appetite, but it's really Xbox Live and PSN that turned the arcade experience into the home experience.



# SONG SPOTLIGHT

By Lyndsey Beatty



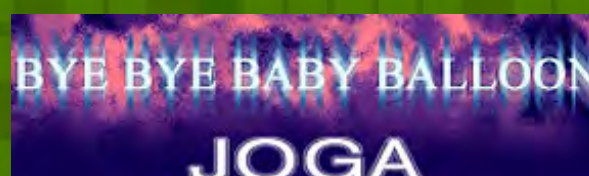
Don't forget to download our DDR glossary of terms!



**Artist:** JS16  
**Difficulty:** 5/6/8  
**Chosen difficulty:** Heavy  
**BPM:** 134

Stomp to My Beat is an old favorite that teaches new players old tricks of the DDR trade. It's not fancy, but it makes learning to do spins easy, much like Butterfly teaches the Butterfly Turn. Stomp to My Beat has one gimmick and that's circling around the dance pad twice. Once you master this, you're probably going to do well with the rest of the song. There are some off-timed step jumps throughout but they aren't terrible to deal with. Just focus on learning the song and mastering the turns.

**Suggested Speed Mod:** x2



**Artist:** JOGA  
**Difficulty:** 3/5/8  
**Chosen difficulty:** Heavy  
**BPM:** 145

JOGA has been known to pump out some bops in the early DDR catalog and Bye Bye Balloon is no different. It's a fun song that plays it straight with the stepchart matching the song really well. Wherever there are lyrics, there are steps in the Heavy stepchart in particular. These spots are easy to navigate, so take care to rest on the freeze arrows when you get the chance. That's a lyrical spot to take a quick breather.

**Suggested Speed Mod:** x2



**Artist:** nc ft. FINALFORCE  
**Difficulty:** 5/7/8  
**Chosen difficulty:** Heavy  
**BPM:** 95-190

Seduction is a fast-paced song with little room for resting. The beginning section is a trick: The song speeds up immediately after the vocal sound effect kicks in, so it's hiding its speed thereafter.

The song is very fast once the true speed starts, and it's hard to keep up if you've selected a Speed Mod. Speeding it up makes it easier to sight read, but that only makes it harder to keep pace. The steps also follow the song well, so it's advantageous to learn the music as always. Beware of the mini-runs that permeate the stepchart at the default speed and when using a Speed Mod.

**Suggested Speed Mod:** x2

dance dance revolution spotlight

1st mix	2nd mix
3rd mix	4th mix
5th mix	6th mix
7th mix	Extreme
SuperNova	
SuperNova 2	

LIGHT
STANDARD
HEAVY
CHALLENGE

## UPCOMING SONGS

GET UP 'N MOVE

AFRONOVA PRIMEVAL

HIGHER (NEXT MORNING MIX)

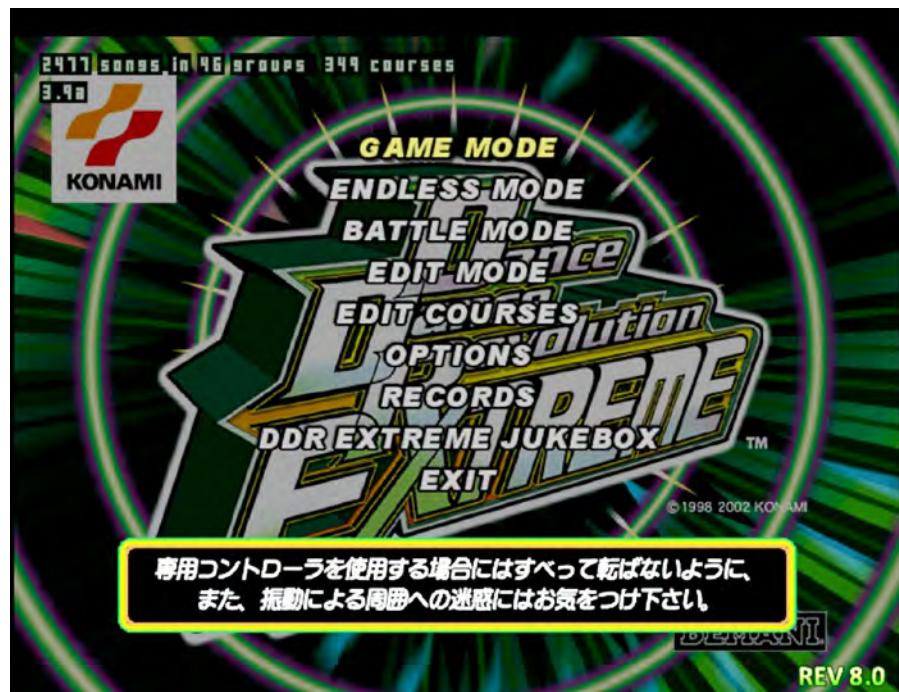
# SYSTEMS

# Dance Dance Revolution Extreme (JP)



**HOW TO PLAY DDR**  
The overall concept of DDR consists of stepping on timed arrows to the beat of a song. Four arrows (in single-player mode; eight if playing doubles) are either at the top of the screen or the bottom (if the Reverse mod is chosen), and specific arrows — termed as a stepchart — rise or fall in concert with music. Stepchart difficulty may range from Beginner to Expert with numbered ratings given to indicate this.

**WHAT IS DDR EXTREME**  
DDR Extreme is the eighth game in the long-running Dance Dance Revolution series. First released in Japanese arcades only on Dec. 25, 2002, DDR Extreme is considered the penultimate entry, featuring a total of 240 songs from the first seven games as well as new songs and crossovers from other Konami Bemani games.



**DDR EXTREME PRESENTATION**  
DDR Extreme presents songs in a wheel format — which first appeared in DDR 5th Mix — similar to the wheel seen in the Price is Right game show. Songs scroll up and down on the wheel in groups, which can be sorted based on name, first game appearance, grading or most played. Song difficulty is presented in categories (Light, Standard, Heavy and Oni) with a foot rating and number to indicate the stepchart's difficulty. A meter called the Groove Radar will indicate the stepchart's complexity in terms of arrow chaos or density. A final meter appears over the top of the song's banner: the Beats Per Minute, which indicates how fast a song will be. Holding down the start button after a song is selected will provide more options, such as speed adjustment, arrow mods and change of difficulty.



**GRADING AND JUDGING**  
As you play through a chosen song, how well you step on arrows is crucial. Timing can be judged as Marvelous — first added in Extreme's Course mode — Perfect, Great, Good, Boo and Miss. Freeze Arrows — first introduced in DDR Max — can be judged as O.K. or N.G. Combos are achieved with correctly timed steps of Marvelous, Perfect or Great judgment. Anything less than Great breaks the combo until the next Great or better is achieved, though this has been changed as of DDR 2013. If too many steps less than Good are made, the Dance Gauge at the top of the screen will decrease and finally empty, meaning the song was failed. At the end of a song or if the song is failed a grade is given, calculated by assigned dance points to each step. Extreme utilizes the following grades: AAA, AA, A, B, C, D and E.

**DANCE POINTS EXPLAINED**

Marvelous: 3 points  
Perfect: 2 points  
Great: 1 point  
Good: 0 points  
Boo: -4 points  
Miss: -8 points  
OK: 6 points  
NG: 0 points

Based on the percentage of your total Dance Points out of the maximum possible number, the following rank is assigned: 100% - AAA, 93% - AA, 80% - A, 65% - B, 45% - C, Less than 45% - D, Fail - E

Source: Remywiki, Taren N. of aaronin.jp



**EXTRA STAGE AND ONE MORE EXTRA STAGE**  
If you perform well in your songs, there is a chance to play two final songs. Introduced in DDR Max, Extra Stage and One More Extra Stage are meant to provide a final challenge for a superior dancer.

Extra Stage is unlocked by achieving an AA grade on the final stage song on Heavy difficulty. Starting in Extreme, any song can be chosen but you are forced to play Heavy or Oni difficulty. Mods that are forced remain the same: Reverse, Dark (arrows don't appear until right before their placement), Pressure (the Dance Gauge never refills once decreased), and x1.5 Speed. If the chosen song is The Legend of Max and is passed with a AA grade or better, you'll be locked to play Dance Dance Revolution by the DDR All-Stars on Oni difficulty with forced mods of Reverse, x3 Speed and Risky/Sudden Death (anything less than Great timing automatically fails the song).



**DDR EXTREME VERSIONS AVAILABLE**  
There are ways to play DDR Extreme: Japanese arcade machine, Japanese and U.S. home versions and Stepmania. The best home console version is the Japanese import for PlayStation 2. The second-best version is U.S. DDR Extreme 2. This version is what the original release of Extreme should have been and is much closer to the Japanese version. If you want a less-than-official experience but something much closer than the home versions, look into Stepmania. The application can be customized to resemble the arcade experience and is free with a wide variety of resources to achieve the ultimate DDR setup. For more information, see Issue 33 — Stepmania Experience — in GI's archives.

**DEVIL MAY CRY 3**  
The demon-hunting classic is our Game of the Quarter nominee.

**CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR, 22**

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**First Quarter 2017**

**Stepmania**  
GI examines the old-school PC dancing simulator

**DANCE SIMULATION GAME**

Credit: Murdoink @ Mortal Kombat Warehouse for all background and logo art and renders/www.mortalkombatwarehouse.com

**LYNDSEY BEATTY**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



## Welcome to a small tournament called Mortal Kombat ...

Hello all, I'm a longtime Mortal Kombat enthusiast who dived headlong into the world of MK Mobile in 2018. This new section delves into the intricacies of character card collection, fusions and team creation for towers.

Look for information on the basics to get you started and how to conquer the 100-level Shao Kahn's Tower to help you when you're ready to take on the challenging themed towers.



## MK MOBILE STATISTICS

- **Number of cards owned:** 163
- **Total number of cards (as of press time):** 167
- **Percentage owned:** 97.6%

### Cards missing (as of press time)

- Circle of Shadow Nightwolf
- MK11 Nightwolf
- Klassic Movie Sonya Blade
- Edenian Blood Rain

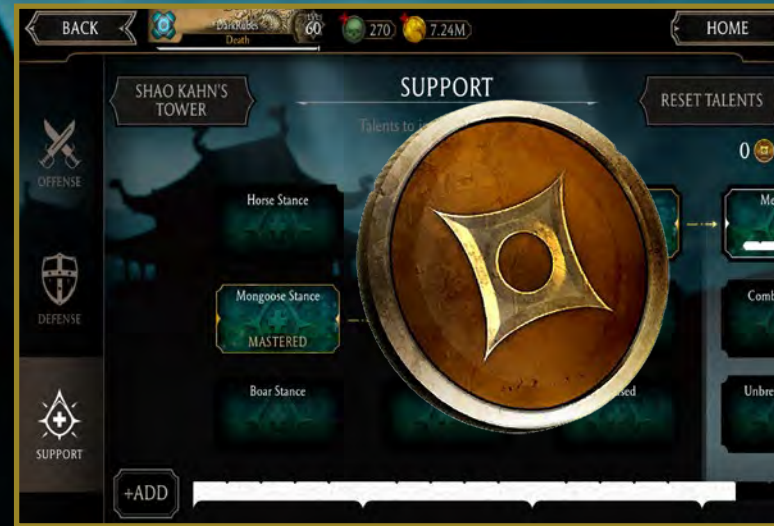


## Shao Kahn's Tower

A challenging 100-story tower that rewards Koins, Souls, Spirit Fragments and Talent Tree Points. Sometimes with unique conditions to overcome, the matches will test your strategy skills and ability to form teams suited to the challenge.

Matches are in increments of three before a refresh is needed to continue. We also will approach this Tower as the warmup to the various Normal and Fatal towers that appear to get you prepped for the real thing.

Individual tower match guides, team formation and strategy will be discussed.



## Talent Tree guide

The ultimate helper in keeping your teams on top is the Talent Tree. Skills will help you stay alive longer, boost your team's damage output or take less damage against the myriad conditions thrown at you in various modes. Talent Tree points are earned in Shao Kahn's Tower and can help change the tide of battle. The talents you unlock give bonuses to your entire account.

We will break down the best choices in the three tree branches and help you chart a path to a well-balanced fighting squad for nearly any situation.



## Character spotlight

Who you have fighting on your side is important, and character analysis helps you stay victorious in Mortal Kombat Mobile.

We're going to look at all available characters, their strengths and weaknesses with rankings for each. We will also spotlight team synergy; who you work with can determine if you're working at all.

# MORTAL KOMBAT MOBILE

Credit: Murdoink @ Mortal Kombat Warehouse for all background and logo art and renders/www.mortalkombatwarehouse.com

## KHARACTER SPOTLIGHT

### THIS ISSUE:

- Blood God Kotal Kahn
- Sun God Kotal Kahn
- Circle of Shadow Quan Chi



**Blood God Kotal Kahn**  
**Class:** Gold  
**Tier:** 3

Blood God Kotal Kahn is marginally useful at best. The only thing that saves him from the garbage tier is his passive, which summons totems to help the team with power regeneration, damage boosts or healing. Otherwise, there are better gold cards available that can do better what he does: Take up space and support.



**Sun God Kotal Kahn**  
**Class:** Gold  
**Tier:** 2

If you thought Blood God Kotal Kahn wasn't that great, you shouldn't be surprised that Sun God is worse. His passive is the only thing decent about him, where he provides a plus-30 percent attack increase for Outworld teammates. The question to ask is, why use him when there are others who have this exact ability and do it better with other bonuses? Other cards immediately render him useless, so don't bother trying to add him to a team unless you specifically have to use him.



**Circle of Shadow Quan Chi**  
**Class:** Diamond  
**Tier:** 4

While all versions of Quan Chi are considered helpful to most teams, the Circle of Shadow version is quite possibly the most annoying. Fighting him is obnoxious because his passive launches a counter-attack up to three times if a Special attack is used against him. Fighting with him makes that passive a great shield for Special attack-happy teams. Pairing him with the right set of teammates — usually Netherrealm — is great, but he also works well on non-Netherrealm squads. He's a useful utility card that earns his place in Tier 4.



## TIER RANKINGS

**Tier 1: Garbage tier.** This tier is for cards that don't do a lot of damage or contribute with their passives, even with add-ons from Shao Kahn's Tower or gear. Use these only if you absolutely are required. These mostly consist of the bronze and silver characters, except for Kenshi Prime.

**Tier 2: Slight useful.** Their passives either contribute or a special move is useful in service of another card. They can be made to be somewhat useful with gear and add-ons and higher fusions, but they struggle to be useful even with

the best gear.

**Tier 3: A solid mid-level card.** These cards are useful in passives and special moves. They can hold their own on point and win matches.

**Tier 4: An above-average card.** These are highly useful and can be used in any of the Challenge Towers (Shirai Ryu, Lin Kuei, etc.) and are more than capable of holding down a roster spot and surviving against high-level cards if their close in level. These cards have

excellent special moves and do a lot of damage quickly.

**Tier 5: The top echelon of cards.** These cards are the best in the game and their special moves and passives have game-breaking potential. They are the cards that you buy packs for and try to build up for Challenge Towers and will potentially make it to the 170 and higher levels of a tower at even a low fusion. They are most diamonds but there are a few gold cards in the mix.

# MORTAL KOMBAT MOBILE

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## SHAO KAHN'S TOWER GUIDE

### THIS ISSUE:

- Match 25: No conditions
- Match 26: Injured
- Match 27: No conditions



### Match 25: Jacqui Briggs (Prime), Level 48/Johnny Cage (Prime), Level 48/Cassie Cage (Prime), Level 48

Conditions: None

This match is your last in facing Silver fusions. It's not hard if you have decent teams of high-level Silvers or even low-level Golds. This is nothing new but focus on quickly taking the team down since there are no conditions to contend with.

**First Tower run:** High-level Silver or low-level Gold

**Second Tower run:** Gold fusions 0 or higher



### Match 26: Ninjutsu Scorpion, Level 48/Balanced Kenshi, Level 40/Spectral Ermac, Level 40

Conditions: Injured

This is the first match of the Tower where you face Gold fusion characters. They're still relatively harmless if you have decent Gold or Diamond characters. The difficulty is increasing, though, so pay attention to the individual team passives so that you don't waste time. The match condition of Injured — one of your Special attacks is disabled — means building up meter quickly to get over the hurdle.

**First Tower run:** Gold fusions II or higher, Diamond fusions - any

**Second Tower run:** Gold fusions II or higher, Diamond fusions - any



### Match 27: Possessed Kenshi, Level 40/Blood God Kotal Kahn, Level 40/Tactical Sonya Blade, Level 40

Conditions: None

The second match featuring Gold fusions is much like the previous match except that there aren't any conditions. Focus on the individual opponent team members' passives and take them out quickly with a well-balanced team.

**First Tower run:** Gold fusions III or higher, Diamond fusions - any

**Second Tower run:** Gold fusions III or higher, Diamond fusions - any



# MORTAL KOMBAT MOBILE



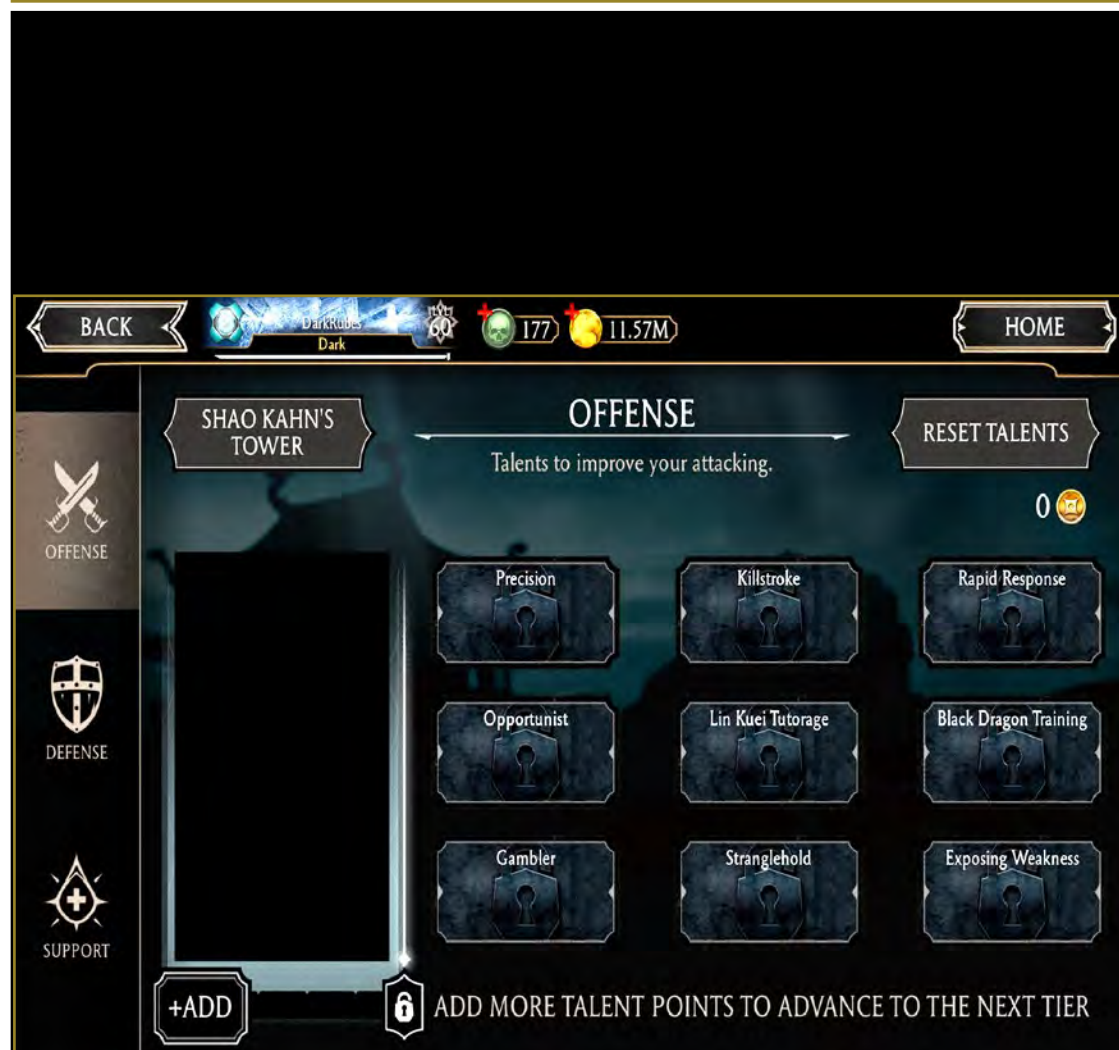
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## TALENT TREE GUIDE

### THIS ISSUE:

- **Offense Talent 02**
- **Offense Talent 03**
- **Offense Talent 04**



### Tier 2

**Best choice:** Precision – This skill is the best choice in this tier as it increases chances of getting a prompt to perform a combo ender by 30 percent and deal additional damage at the end of a combo more often as a result. This also helps to build up your power bar quicker, which is the key to triggering your specials sooner.

### Secondary choices:

Opportunist – This skill is a great choice if you heavily use Scorpion and Sub-Zero cards as it increases damage on stunned and frozen oppo-

nents by 50 percent. If they use their own gear and it stacks with this skill, they will get 100 percent damage boost on stunned and frozen opponents.

**Gambler** – This isn't a bad choice for Special Attack 1 and 2 damage increases. With this skill maxed, theoretically, you could add 60 percent more damage to Special Attack Mini-Game results. If it's a high damage Special Attack 2 — such as Gunslinger Erron Black's Stand Off — the added damage would be extremely effective in downing even the highest health enemy quickly.



### Tier 3

In this tier, it's a straight toss-up between increasing Special 1 damage or increasing Special 2 damage.

**Best choice:** Lin Kuei Tutorage – This would be the recommended choice as there is currently no equipment or character passive that increases critical damage to balance things. This skill

would give you a 22 percent boost to critical attack damage. Normally, critical attacks deal 150 percent damage compared to a normal attack, so this would increase the damage of the attack to 172 percent of normal damage, which is good. With the current gear offering a decent chance at getting critical attacks, each attack will hit harder than what they would without this skill.



### Tier 4

**Best choice:** Black Dragon Training – This is the next best choice as it further increases the chance for critical attacks on top of what character passives or gear can offer as of now. When mastered, this skill provides a 17 percent crit chance boost so coupled with gear (25 percent boost) or character passives (50 percent if using Hat Trick Kung Lao), which increases it to a

maximum possible chance of 92 percent.

With gear like the Devastator already adding a damage boost of 50 percent to Special 1 attack, the Rapid Response skill will increase that to 80 percent, but it will leave your Special 2 short-handed. Cards like Cyrax deal massive damage with its Special 1 attack while diamonds deal heavy damage with their Special 2 attacks.



## WORKING WITH TALENT POINTS

Courtesy of TestYourMight.com

### Earning Talent Points

There is only one source of earning talent points: SHAO KAHN'S TOWER. Before you play the tower for the first time, you are given two talent points to start. The tower has 100 battles with increasing difficulty, and you are rewarded one talent point for winning each battle.

However, you are limited to playing three matches each day by default. However, you can play more than three matches by spending 50 souls to refresh the limit, and this can be done twice in a 24-hour period, which increases your limit to nine matches a day if you decide to spend souls to progress at a much faster rate.

### Investing Talent Points

On completing Shao Kahn's Tower, you are rewarded with a total of 102 talent points which you can spend any way you like. There are two areas of the talent tree in each category where talent points can be invested, unlocking skill tiers and buying skills and their upgrades.

There are seven skill tiers in each category and there are a total of 20 skills to choose from. The first six tiers have three skills each to choose from and the seventh tier has two skills. The first tier is unlocked by default, and you are allowed to invest in one of the three available skills. To unlock the subsequent tiers, you are required to buy a skill in the current tier that is accessible to you and then spend five Talent Points. This is done by clicking the Add button at the bottom left of the tree. You are given a choice of spending one, three or five Talent Points towards unlocking the next tier. Selecting the five-point option will automatically unlock the next tier.

Additionally, skills can also be upgraded as well to increase the effect beyond what the skill provides at default. There are five upgrade levels and each upgrade costs one Talent Point, so a skill costs five Talent Points to master. To have a 100 percent complete tree in a category, you have to buy and master seven skills and also unlock six tiers in the process. This will cost a total of 65 Talent Points. To have 100 percent completion in all three categories, the cost is 195 Talent Points.

### Choosing your skills and upgrades

This is the most crucial part of the whole talent tree system, and it requires careful planning of knowing what skills to invest in. This requires a thorough understanding of your own play style, the kind of characters you use and knowing which skills from the list will bring the most benefit to the majority of the cards you use more often in Faction Wars.

You cannot purchase more than one skill in a tier per category at a given time, so you are only allowed to choose seven out of the 20 skills in a category. The fact that you only have 102 Talent Points to spend means that it is possible to master seven skills only in one of the three categories.

After having a look at all of the available kills across all three categories, investing of Talent Points more on the DEFENSE and SUPPORT categories is highly recommended.

# Looking forward to future end of South Park foolishness

There are few times we here at Gaming Insurrection exercise condemnation. Mostly, we just let whatever it is go on and act a fool, and we give it disapproving old lady and old man stares.

Sometimes, you just let folks find out for themselves that they're doing too much.

But every once in a while, there's something going on beyond just acting a fool. It's foolishness and devilry that defies all common sense and decency. This is the type of foolishness where we're liable to snatch them up in a store and ask if their mamas and daddies taught them some home training. Call it Southern grace or whatever, but we're fixing to pop the soul out of South Park 64.

This heathen child came from the dark recesses of South Park as a franchise. The perpetually unfunny, acting-up trash TV show has been on the air since the late '90s and someone keeps giving it pass after pass after pass to continue being unfunny. We're ashamed to say we watched the early seasons, but we will also be quick to say that we came to our senses long ago and stopped giving any credence or attention to it right about the time they insulted the late great Issac Hayes. Seriously, he was the best part about the early seasons, and after they bit the hand that was keeping it together, they promptly got sent to the woodshed and told to never return.

But as it were, before they got sent off for some desperately needed corporal punishment, the seriously unfunny duo of Trey Parker and Matt Stone conjured up some dark magic in the form of the first video game based on the franchise and convinced someone to give them money and put it on the Nintendo 64. I consider myself a learned individual with taste, and yet, I am here to tell the yarn about how I played this monstrosity and survived.

The game is one of the worst first-person shooters I have ever encountered in my long gaming career. From the crazy drawn-in fog



graphics that inspire insipid thoughts of Superman 64, the repetitive music and sound clips, to the atrocious and non-sensical

plot, there is absolutely nothing redeeming about wandering around South Park. Sure, it captures the look and feel of the show but beyond that, what are we really talking about here? Paper cutout characters looking just as good as they do in an equally terrible-looking show? Why was and still is the show a thing? Why is this game even a thing? You cannot convince me that the game is the product of scintillating television that just demanded that a game be created to provide the masses with more enjoyment of South Park antics.

Every time I see this or any South Park spinoff product, I think to myself that someone

ought to call CPS on their parents for wanton neglect and gross cruelty. This is cruelty to humanity and Parker and Stone are still being allowed to beat to death a child/joke that got old 15 minutes after the first episode aired. This is where we don't have and didn't have strong enough condemnation to stand up and say this is trash. Nope, South Park 64 was wilding just by existing and remains a mascot for Team Doing Too Much while doing absolutely nothing well.

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## PROPERTY REVIEW

**Loki Season 2**  
Marvel Studios, 2023



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARVEL.COM

### Loki Season 2 worth the wait

**W**hat a ride. Loki has consistently proven himself to be the showstopper we all knew him to be after the first Thor film. Whether it's stealing the Tesseract (and scenes) in Avengers or stealing hearts in Thor: Ragnarök, we all knew that Loki had a ton of mischief to get up to and quality to uphold when his solo show was announced. And, boy, was that done well.

We've discussed at length in the Strip about the first season of the show, how glorious it was (Editor's note: See Issue 40), and how we were eagerly anticipating the second season. In the two years between airings, we dissected everything about the show and the implications for the future of the MCU. We lauded Tom Hiddleston's portrayal of the mainstay villain and his redemption arc turning him into the antihero we always knew him to be. But, we had questions about where it was going to go and how it would look once we got here. And now we're here. And it is glorious.

Season 2 picks up where we last left off with Loki tumbling back into the TVA and realizing he's somewhere ... different. One of the questions we had in the Season 1 finale was, where or when is Loki? It was a big twist that we felt had huge implications with its answer. We were correct, because given that it's a show about time, immediately answering that it's when that's important here sets the tone for the entirety of Season 2. You're going to go on a fantastic journey through space and time, mostly focused on

the branching of time and weaving of time. Most importantly, we get origin stories for our now-beloved characters and a more coherent understanding of the multiverse and variants.

The best part of all of this is Hiddleston and the surrounding cast. We're always impressed with the way Hiddleston gives us glimpses into Loki's being and then blows us away with a quiet moment that no one sees coming. His depth and skill at playing this character after 12 years is outstanding and further cements the fact that he is the best part of it all, even now. His surrounding cast is also impressive.

Owen Wilson — who has quietly and consistently crept into the conversation of meaty range and depth over the years — absolutely shines here as Mobius. His performance makes it feel as if he's always been part of the crew of Marvel, and we hope there is more Mobius to go around in the future.

Sophia Di Martino is another standout, and we need to go on record for a minute to talk about her chemistry with Hiddleston. She knocks it out of the park in every scene — with special mention for episode 5's record store scene — and they are phenomenal together in every scene this season. The growth that both actors put into who could be one-dimensional characters is obvious and we love to see it.

See LOKI SEASON 2, PAGE 27



**Lyndsey Beatty**  
STRIP TALK

### We'd prefer MK lost its focus on guest characters

**I** like most decent, red-blooded Americans, love video games and comic books. I mean, that should be obvious by now. Also, what should be obvious is that I love Mortal Kombat. The vehicle you're reading this sentence in has been the subject of many MK musings and will definitely be in about two issues. Everything MK.

What's a little less obvious, however, is how much I love The Boys. I promise you, long before it was fashionable, I was trying to get my hands on Garth Ennis' masterful satire take on the superhero genre. So, color me not surprised when the live-action version of the graphic novel became a bonafide hit. Also color me not surprised when Homelander — the over-the-top murderous Superman analogue — started showing up everywhere.

Don't get me wrong: I LOVE Antony Starr as Homelander. You're really tuning in to see what he's going to say and do in every season. He is the star and the draw of the show, after all. But let's get back to Mortal Kombat for a second. You know what's the draw and star of the franchise? The ridiculous, over-the-top ways you can kill fictional characters. Murderous Superman analogue and murderous game franchise combining to let you play as murderous Superman analogue? What could go wrong?™ Let's explore that.

First of all, it's been made plainly clear many times that Homelander is functionally immortal and impervious to a lot of things. There isn't even kryptonite to slow him down, because he's not a native of a planet that exploded because of it; he just plays one on TV. So, how exactly are we going to kill Homelander? Second, how does Homelander (and by extension Omni-Man and Peacemaker) exist in this universe? They are fictional characters doing a guest spot in a universe that doesn't acknowledge most other fictional universe elements around it with the exception of random guest characters. Third, why

See HOMELANDER, PAGE 27

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Gundam Thunderbolt Vol. 2 looks at war, death

#### ANIME LOUNGE

Junjou Romantica 3 boys' love ends

#### TOP 5 LIST

We detail our favorite DC characters

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# Gundam Thunderbolt Vol. 2 highlights war, death

**Brandon Beatty**  
**OTAKU CORNER**

*Editor's note: Contains descriptions of drug use, suicide, use of children as war combatants and abuse involving medical treatment.*

I previously reviewed Mobile Suit Gundam: Thunderbolt, a Gundam story that takes place at the same time of the original series but has two new characters taking part in battles between Earth and Zeon forces for the "Thunderbolt sector" during the One Year War. Volume 2 shows war and its nearly irreparable effect where no one is untouched. The advisory warning given may not be enough, so I would like to apologize to readers that may become triggered.

At the end of the first volume, the first encounter between Io Fleming and Daryl Lorenz ended with Io gaining the win through use of a prototype Gundam known as "Full Armor." The Moore Brotherhood fleet uses the momentum to launch an ambush on the Zeon fleet. The ambush resulted in major blows dealt to the Zeon fleet, losing crew and Zakus, but Captain Claudia Peer was disappointed that the attack failed to eliminate the Zeon fleet guarding the Thunderbolt sector. As both sides regrouped from the battle, Daryl is subjected to another medical procedure; this time his hands are amputated by Zeon medical staff to continue research on the experimental Zaku known as "Psycho Zaku." During the procedure, Daryl reminisces about himself and his dad Christmas shopping, and he sees the radio that he now uses in battle to listen to music. After the operation, Daryl is promoted to ensign with orders to pilot the Psycho Zaku in the next battle against the Moore Brotherhood fleet.

Elsewhere, the fleet is readying for the next battle by receiving new supplies, new mobile suits and new pilots that range from ages 10 to 17 who are pulled from Federation refugee camps. As the preparations continue, Io has a flashback in which he and the staff of his family's home finds his father, the mayor of the Moore space colony, dead from shooting himself in the head. As Io drifts further into the flashback, his friend Cornelius Kaka tells him that he is instructed to lead the next assault on the Thunderbolt sector with the new recruits. Not pleased with this mission, Io goes to confront Claudia in her quarters and finds her in a drug overdose in which he awakens her asking why she was using drugs, which affects her ability to lead the fleet. Claudia responds sharply that Io's father is responsible for the deaths of Moore's citizens and calls him a selfish coward with no feelings.

Meanwhile, Daryl speaks with Zeon scientist Kara Mitchum, who helps him with his space suit and confesses that she cut off his right hand and apologizes to him. Daryl forgives her and continues his readiness for the battle ahead. When both forces meet in the Thunderbolt sector, a fierce battle begins with most of the new recruits dying instantly, including one that attempted to warn the Moore fleet, but Daryl kills him and immediately trails the Brotherhood fleet.



Once the fleet appears, Daryl using the Psycho Zaku, destroys the entire fleet. As Claudia gives evacuation orders, her second in command Graham shoots her, believing that she was too weak to fight Zeon. The remnants of the Moore fleet were able to capture the Zeon vessel, Dried Fish. With this second battle ending in a draw, Io and Daryl remain dedicated to destroying the other as thunder and death cheer from the sidelines.

Volume 2 accomplished its mission in separating from the campy side of Gundam that it's known for. Ohtagaki-san's writing and art undisputedly does the Gundam legacy justice. Reading each chapter, I felt the waves of anguish from Io and Daryl but am glad that their need for survival did not override their ability to show compassion to others. As the manga continues, each character had a back story making me question who is providing mental health counseling during this war. While I won't say that Zeon forces are angels, I was incensed that the Earth Federation sunk to a horrible low using children (CHILDREN!) as pilots

See OTAKU, PAGE 27



**Series:** Junjou Romantica 3

**Episodes:** 1-12

**Premise:** This is the third season of the acclaimed boys' love series, and things are settling down for the couples in Junjou Romantica, Egoist, Terrorist and new series Mistake. The new season sees the lead couple, Misaki and Akihiko, learning how to adapt to their changing relationship and what it means for Misaki to become a full-fledged adult. Misaki must think about graduating from college and getting a job, and together the duo must figure out how to explain their growing relationship to Takahiro, Misaki's older brother and Akihiko's best friend.

**Is it worth watching?:** Yes. This is, so far, the final season of the series and it's been a fun ride to see how the couples grow. If you've invested in the couples, you'll want to see how everything shakes out. There are also more rivals for Misaki's heart, which makes things interesting.

**Breakout character:** Misaki. Sure, he's the lead character, but he makes leaps and bounds of growth and comes into his own. He stands out, finally, because he should, and he starts to finally become a fully fleshed-out lead uke.

**Where it's going?:** This is the end for the three couples, though some of characters make a few cameos in the spinoff Sekaiichi Hatsukoi.



# MARVEL CHARACTER HIGHLIGHT

**Name:** Remy Etienne LeBeau

**Alias:** Gambit, Horseman of Death

**Affiliation:** X-Men, Thieves Guild, Excalibur, X-Factor, Marauders, Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Chevaliers, X-Treme Sanctions Executive, Crimson Pirates, Unified Guild of New Orleans

**Special abilities:** Kinetic “charging” of potential energy in objects/beings, molecular cell acceleration, regenerative healing, master thief, gifted intellect

**Background:** Remy LeBeau began life on the streets of New Orleans as a thief. He pickpocketed the head of the Thieves Guild and the leader took him into the clan. Over time, he fell in love with the leader’s daughter and planned to marry her. However, her brother objected to the marriage, and Gambit killed him in a self-defense duel. After he was exiled, he found Mr. Sinister and enlisted his help in managing his mutant powers. Sinister helped but this left Gambit indebted, which Sinister naturally exploited. Sinister then sent Gambit on a mission to the Morlock tunnels, where Gambit learned he was to wipe out the fellow mutants. He resisted and was attacked and left for dead by his fellow Marauder Sabretooth. He did manage to save the future mutant known as Marrow. Once he left the Marauders, he met Storm of the X-Men, who sponsored his team membership. It was also how he met and fell in love with his soulmate Rogue. After a long courtship, the two mutants were married while remaining on the team. Shortly after, the future time-traveling mutant known as Bishop joined the team to warn of a traitor who would destroy the X-Men from within in his timeline. Bishop

originally believed the traitor to be Gambit, but eventually it was revealed to be the psionic mutant menace known as Onslaught.

**Relationships:** Rogue (Anna Marie LeBeau), wife; Mystique (Raven Darkholme), mother-in-law; Destiny (Irene Adler), mother-in-law; Graydon Creed, brother-in-law; Nightcrawler (Kurt Wagner), brother-in-law; Belladonna, former fiancée

**First Versus appearance:** X-Men vs. Street Fighter

**Appearances in other media:**

**Television:** X-Men: The Animated Series, X-Men '97 (planned appearance), Spider-Man, Fantastic Four, X-Men: Evolution, Wolverine and the X-Men

**Film:** X-Men Origins: Wolverine

**Video games:** Spider-Man/X-Men: Arcade's Revenge, X-Men (1993), X-Men 2: Clone Wars, X-Men: Game-master's Legacy, X-Men: Mojo World, X-Men: Mutant Apocalypse, Wolverine: Adamantium Rage, X-Men vs. Street Fighter, Marvel vs. Capcom: Clash of Super Heroes, Marvel vs. Capcom 2: New Age of Heroes, X-Men: Mutant Academy, X-Men: Mutant Academy 2, X-Men: Next Dimension, X-Men Legends, X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse, Marvel: Ultimate Alliance, Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2, X-Men Origins: Wolverine, Marvel Super Hero Squad Online, X-Men: Destiny, Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3, Marvel: Avengers Alliance, Marvel Heroes, LEGO Marvel Super Heroes, Marvel Puzzle Quest, Marvel: Future Fight, Marvel Ultimate Alliance 3: The Black Order, Marvel Super War, Fortnite, Marvel Snap



## TOP 5 ON THE STRIP — FAVORITE DC CHARACTERS EDITION



**Atrocitus:** First of all, the guy and his cat look cool. Finding them on the character select screen of Injustice 2 is like Christmas coming early because I'm already intrigued at what they possibly can do. Add in his backstory as the leader of the Red Lantern Corps and you have one of the best DC villains.



**The Joker:** The eternal archnemesis of Batman is beloved at GI for many reasons, but generally his history of chaos is the driving reason. No matter who portrays him — Jack Nicholson is our favorite version — the character still makes us laugh until we can't.



**Batman:** Of course, if the Joker is on this list, you know Batman is as well. Batman — Bruce Wayne only — is our favorite DC hero for a long list of reasons, and be rest assured that they don't involve how much prep time he has. Batman doesn't need prep time. He's just that dangerous with a little money in his pocket.



**Darkseid:** The Apokolips villain appears on a few lists here at GI when it comes to favorite DC characters, mostly because he's a bad dude. Anyone who employs a person named Granny Goodness is entitled to a bad dude label. Also, the Omega Sanction is one of the coolest named and actual moves ever created in comic books.



**Black Adam:** The supervillain is one of a kind, and it doesn't hurt that he's now being drawn to look like The Rock. Strong enough to take on Superman and cocky enough to hold his own also, Black Adam has enough swagger to take down the Justice League and mean it.

# Loki reveals glorious purpose in series finale

LOKI SEASON 2, from PAGE 24

Jonathan Majors continues to be fantastic in his portrayal of Kang and his variants, with us noting that he effortlessly showed us different versions of the same man in a million different ways. He is to be lauded and we await the outcome of his off-screen troubles because it has major implications for where Kang will go and become.

Wunmi Mosaku as B-15 continues to be fantastic as well. We have learned to look to her measured portrayal as the voice of reason in an otherwise chaotic show and she does it with a ton of aplomb and stoic reason. We're looking for Mosaku in a lot of other things from now on.

Gugu Mbatha-Raw continues to delight as Ravonna Renslayer. Learning her motivations this season and watching her unravel in her quest to understand what the TVA was and is has been a joy. We don't know where she's going from here, but Mbatha-Raw is fun to watch.

And last but not least, series newcomer Ke Huy Quan has been absolutely fun to watch. He shows up in the first episode and



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARVEL.COM

**Tom Hiddleston, Ke Huy Quan and Owen Wilson star in season 2 of Loki.**

makes an immediately favorable first impression, knocking our socks off with his quick-witted

delivery and enthusiasm. He's quickly become one of our favorite characters, and we hope OB

hangs around to keep the TVA solid. He's crucial and we're glad to see him join our ragtag band of

time jumpers.

Support characters Casey and Brad/X-5 are also fun additions, and we're glad to see they were fleshed out just as much as the rest of the crew. And the call back from Casey's not knowing what a fish was in the first episode of Season 1 versus his origin story mention in Season 2 was an especially nice touch.

Now that we know where Loki is going with its Season 2 finale — and how it ties into the future of the MCU, we're sad and anxious because it means no more Loki.

The story has been told and Loki has gained his glorious purpose, but he's around. Will he be around for more story? It's hard to tell, but what a ride it has been to get here with this review.

Our MCU savior is apparently here. And glorious.

**Acting: 10**

**Like the comics: 10**

**Production: 10**

**Total score: 30/30 or 10**

## Gundam Thunderbolt Vol. 2 an intense ride

OTAKU, from PAGE 25

to fight because they had early new type abilities. I was also taken aback that a character in a Gundam story resorted to use drugs to deal with pressure of being a high-ranking official in a military environment where she can rarely afford the luxury of emotion.

Seeing Graham's disgusting betrayal toward a fellow comrade also incensed me, especially since Claudia was doing her responsibility of saving her crew. I also found a profile in cowardice in Zeon scientist JJ Sexton, who claims he was saving the Psycho Zaku data but pushed injured people out of an escape pod, saving his pitiful hide.

Despite the sadness in Volume 2, Viz Media's Joe Yamazaki and STAN! were brilliant with translation and English adaptation work, making this volume worth re-reading.

Mobile Suit Gundam: Thunderbolt Volume 2 continues its brutal, yet unflinching view of war between Earth and space. With a stage of destiny set, Io Fleming and Daryl Lorenz vow to remove each other from that stage. I'm excited for future installments of this great Gundam manga.

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## MK1 guests newest, weirdest picks

HOMELANDER, from PAGE 24

hasn't Mortal Kombat as a franchise learned its lesson about guest characters yet? They keep shoehorning these extra characters in when there are so many more neglected MK characters to revive and fan favorites that other folks want playable (Editor's Note: I'm shouting out Sareena for my habibi Yiannis). No, I don't want Jason from Friday the 13th. No, I don't want Freddy from A Nightmare on Elm Street. No, I don't want Omni-Man or Homelander. I want Sareena or Jade. Hell, I'll even take Khameleon/Chameleon because at least I know them. What I don't want is some rando from a franchise that has nothing to do with Mortal Kombat. Mortal Kom-

bat world building has always been about the tournament, the realms, fighting for life and death. It is not about the latest and greatest random character that happens to be awesome in pop culture.

These additional characters just randomly showing up as fighters in the Kombat Packs is the very definition of doing too much. Instead of wasting time on characters that shouldn't be there, maybe flesh out some of the older ones that the Nether-

Realm crew seems to act like don't exist. There are 77 total characters created. Surely, one or a few can be chosen to flesh out the packs if they don't make the main roster. This need to jump to guest characters is annoying as an MK elder. Get that pop culture off my MK lawn, whippersnappers.

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